



## NHL Executive Summary



- Name of Property:** Riverside Historic District NHL (update)
- City, State:** Riverside, Illinois
- Period of Significance:** 1870-1959
- NHL Criteria:** 4 and 5
- NHL Theme:** I. Peopling Places, 4. Community and Neighborhood  
III. Expressing Cultural Values, 5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design
- Previous Recognition:** National Register of Historic Places – 1969, National Historic Landmark – 1970
- National Historic Context:** XVI. Architecture V. Historic District (multiple styles and dates)
- NHL Significance:**
- Riverside is significant under NHL Criterion 4 as an outstanding representative of a planned suburb designed by recognized masters Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Calvert Vaux.
  - Under NHL Criterion 5, the intact character of the designed landscape in conjunction with the wide range of architectural styles found in the district’s residences form a distinctive community that



represents the late nineteenth-century prototypical ideal of suburban life—combining the best of the city and country.

- Riverside was a significant, early prototype of a railroad suburb that was studied and emulated by future designers. Olmsted and Vaux designed Riverside to be a permanent residential community that provided a tranquil and beautiful environment. The landscape design is naturalistic and informal with aspects of both the pastoral and picturesque.
- The Riverside Historic District NHL update proposes a new boundary to encompass the entire area executed under the Olmsted and Vaux 1869 General Plan of Riverside. The goal is a more thorough understanding of the extent to which the plan was carried out and a clearer idea of how the community evolved.

**Integrity:**

- The Olmsted, Vaux and Company design for Riverside is more comprehensively fashioned and has endured with a higher degree of integrity than Olmsted’s other suburban community commissions.
- Riverside remains a distinguished representation of the extraordinary meshing of landscape architecture design philosophy with suburban development.
- The character and details of the landscape pattern and organization initially implemented from 1870 to 1898 remain clearly discernible and vibrant with a high degree of integrity. The same is true for the contributing commercial, residential, and secondary structures constructed through the district’s build-out period ending in 1959.

**Owner of Property:** Multiple owners

**Acreage of Property:** 1,176 acres (original NHL 1,130)

**Origins of Nomination:** This updated nomination for Riverside is intended to correct omissions in the 1970 nomination. The original nomination was incomplete by current standards in failing to enumerate and clearly describe the contributing features of the landscape in the historic district. It did not include acreage, which is addressed in this revision to accurately include all land incorporated in the suburb.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** Updated documentation will allow more effective preservation of the Riverside Historic District NHL.

**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

**Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of August 21, 2023):**

- Joseph A. Ballerine, Village President, Village of Riverside
- Richard Julian, Chair, Riverside Historical Commission
- Yvonne Lucero, President, Frederick Law Olmsted Society of Riverside
- Riverside Landscape Advisory Commission

**Landmarks Committee Comments:**

- Add information on restrictive covenants and their use to tacitly create segregated neighborhoods during the period of Jim Crow.



**Landmarks Committee Recommendation:**

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the NHL boundary change and updated documentation for the Riverside Historic District in Riverside, Illinois, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

**Advisory Board Recommendation:** The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the boundary change and updated documentation for the Riverside Historic District NHL in Riverside, Illinois.